

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 05571 151556Z

15

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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R 151336Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5311

INFO USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALUCTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5571

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, CH

SUBJ: INDIANS NAME AMBASSADOR TO PEKING

REF: NEW DELHI 4931

1. FONMIN CHAVAN TOLD PARLIAMENT APRIL 15 THAT PURSUANT TO INDIA'S TRADITION AND POLICY OF DEVELOPING AMICABLE RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY ITS NEIGHBORS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOI AND PRC IN DELHI AND PEKING HAD DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF RESTORING THE LEVEL OF DEIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN BOTH COUNTRIES TO AMBASSADORIAL STATUS. THE GOI HAD DECIDED TO APPOINT K. R. NARAYANAN, CURRENTLY SECRETARY IN THE MEA, AND
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 05571 151556Z

THE CHINESE HAVING GIVEN AGREEMENT, NARAYANAN WOULD

TAKE UP HIS POST IN ABOUT TWO MONTHS. CHAVAN NTUED THAT "ON THE BASIS OF DISCUSSIONS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE, IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS INITIATIVE FOR RAISING THE LEVEL OF OUR DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN PEKING WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A SIMILAR MOVE BY THE GOVT OF THE PRC."

2. THE GOI HAS BEEN FISHING AROUND FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS FOR SOME FACE-SAVING FORMULA FOR REESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH PEKING. THE PROBLEM HAS PARTIALLY FOUNDERED ON THE CHINESE INSISTENCE THAT THE INDIANS MOVE FIRST SINCE THEY HAD WITHDRAWN THEIR AMBASSADOR FROM PEKING A YEAR BEFORE THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR LEFT NEW DELHI. BUT INTERMITTENT POLITICAL FLAREUPS RELATING TO CHINESE REACTIONS TO THE INDIAN ABSORPTION OF SIKKIM, THE CHANGE IN THE BANGLADESH GOVT LAST SUMMER, AND THE BORDER INCIDENT IN OCTOBER 1975 HAVE APPEARED TO MUDDY THE WATERS. THERE WAS A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY AROUND A PING-PONG DELEGATION TO INDIA EARLY IN 1975 AND A STOP-OVER IN CALCUTTA BY PRC VICE-PREMIER CH'EN HSI-LIEN, BUT SOME ALPHONSE/GASTON FUMBLING BY BOTH SIDES ON WHO WOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN ASKING FOR APPOINTMENTS LED THESE EFFORTS UP A BLIND ALLEY. AGAIN LAST SUMMER THE INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY ASKED THE CHINESE CHARGE HERE FOR SOME SUGGESTION ON HOW TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, BUT THIS ELICITED NO REACTION FROM THE CHINESE UNTIL APPARENTLY THE INDIANS DREW SOME SOLACE FROM VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HAN NIEN-LUNG'S BEHAVIOR AT THE JANUARY 26, 1976 INDIAN NATIONAL DAY PARTY IN PEKING.

3. THE GOI ITSELF FINALLY DECIDED TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE LAST MONTH, WITHOUT ANY UNEQUIVOCAL CHINESE ASSURANCE THAT IT WOULD RETURN AN AMBASSADOR TO NEW DELHI. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHINESE HAD TOLD OTHER DIPLOMATS IN PEKING (E.G., THE SRI LANKAN COUNSELLOR) THAT THEY WOULD CERTAINLY RESPOND IF THE INDIANS SENT AN AMBASSADOR TO PEKING, BUT THE CHINESE APPARENTLY DID NOT GIVE SUCH ASSURANCES EQUALLY FIRMLY TO THE INDIANS THEMSELVES (PEKING 0369). CHAVAN'S PUBLIC STATEMENT ANTICIPATING PRC RECIPROCATATION IS PROBABLY THE VERY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 05571 151556Z

LEAST WHICH GOI COULD DO POLITICALLY TO JUSTIFY ITS HAVING TAKEN THE FIRST STEP.

4. WE HAVE NO CLEAR READING AT THIS POINT ON WHY THE INDIANS DROPPED THEIR LONG-STANDING EFFORT TO GET THE PRC TO COMMIT ITSELF UNEQUIVOCALLY ON RETURNING AN AMBASSADOR TO DELHI BEFORE MOVING. THE GOI IS PROBABLY ANXIOUS (AND HAS BEEN FOR SOME TIME) TO

IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER MAJOR POWERS IN THE REGION AND TO SUCK OFF ITS IMAGE AS A SOVIET ALLY. INDIA'S NEIGHBORS MAY FEEL SOME RELIEF AT AN IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS WHICH MAY TAKE SOME INDIAN HEAT OFF THEIR OWN RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AND EASE ONE ELEMENT IN INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH NEPAL, SRI LANKA, AND POTENTIALLY BANGLADESH. PAKISTAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, MAY FEEL SOME CONCERN OVER THE NEW DEVELOPMENT. WITH THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE COMING UP IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, IMPROVED SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS MAY BE WELCOMED BY THE STATES OF SEA AS WELL, AND THE INDIANS MAY BELIEVE THEIR OWN IMAGE WILL BENEFIT ELSEWHERE IN ASIA.

5. NEVERTHELESS, WE SEE ONLY MARGINAL SHORT-TERM SPECIFIC BENEFITS FOR INDIA FROM A RESTORATION OF AMBASSADORIAL TIES, AND SOME POTENTIAL EMBARRASSMENT IN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS, ALTHOUGH WE EXPECT THE LATTER WILL PROFESS TO BE UNCONCERNED AND INDIAN MEA OFFICIALS HAVE EMPHASIZED PRIVATELY THAT THEY SEE NO POSSIBLE GROUNDS FOR SOVIET DISAPPROVAL.

6. WE WILL BE SEEING AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE NARAYANAN EARLY NEXT WEEK, AS WELL AS OTHER SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS DEALING WITH CHINA AND HOPE TO HAVE MORE TO ADD ON INDIAN EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATIONS SUBSEQUENTLY. NARAYANAN HIMSELF IS PROBABLY AN EXCELLENT CHOICE AS AMBASSADOR, BEING BOTH VERY BRIGHT AND HAVING CHINA-DESK AND EAST ASIA EXPERIENCE. (BIO INFO WILL BE PROVIDED INNEXT FEW DAYS.)
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